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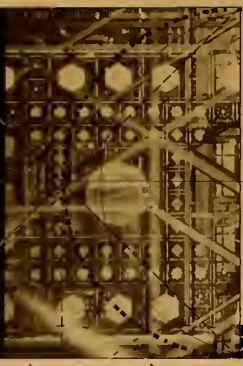

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A VERBAL AND VISUAL FORUM FOR MINDS IN THE DEPT. OF ARCHITECTURE

THRESH

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1

"The Making of the Discourse on Islamic Architecture"

by Sibel Bozdogan and Nasser Rabbat

The other day, we were contemplating a hypothetical academic setting in an Islamic country. We imagined lecture courses covering the history of architecture from prehistory to the present from an Islamic perspective, as well as advanced seminars on individual works, architects and themes. We came up with titles such as "Intro to History of Architecture from the Ziggurat of Mesopotamia to Critical Regionalism," "Classical Revival in the Medieval Period," (in Anatolia and Syria that is), "The Works and Writings of Mimar Sinan," "Architecture and Ideology in the Early 20th Century," (again in Turkey and Egypt) etc. For the intellectually curious, we thought there could be one course on "Western Architecture" (from Classical Greece to Deconstruction) occupying a place among *area/cultural* studies.

The seeming absurdity of this picture, structuring and categorizing the history of architecture from a specific, unusual perspective is not unlike the way in which the history of Western architecture is commonly portrayed as history of architecture *par excellence* – a paradigm that we have all thoroughly internalized to the point that we rarely question it. These reflections gave us the initial inspiration to develop a course which we decided to call "The Making of the Discourse on Islamic Architecture." It is a course *not* about Islamic architecture, but about the texts, representations and mental attitudes that construct it and assign it a particular place in knowledge and scholarship.

Such a critical reading of the study and representation of Islamic architecture provides the vehicle to unveil the dominant paradigm of traditional Western scholarship. This paradigm affirms and legitimizes a self-conscious and historically evolving identity for the West by casting other cultures in anthropological and a-historical categories, while the very ideals of scholarship, intellectual curiosity and quest for knowledge are themselves frequently portrayed as exclusively Western attributes. Thus, for example, inquiries into the indebtedness of Greek architecture to Mesopotamia, the common classical heritage of architecture in the Islamic Middle East and Christian Europe, the rich and fruitful interaction between them in the Medieval period, and their similar historicizing attitudes in the pre-Modern era are usually neglected, and sometimes negated, simply because they could not fit within the politically accepted construct of an evolutionary history of architecture in the West. Instead, traditional Western scholarship adopts an epistemological framework based on well-known binary oppositions like East/West, static/dynamic, sensual/rational, decorative/tectonic, traditional/modern etc. This model reduces Islamic architecture to a set of prevalent characterizations, static and decorative being the favorites, and establishes its prescribed slot in the chain of architectural evolution.

In addressing the various ways in which Islamic culture and architecture were represented, codified and reproduced, we were informed and inspired by recent literature in cultural criticism which is less about the cultures and histories of the Other (whether they are Orientals, women, blacks) than about their anthropological appropriation by hegemonic forms of knowledge. Our greatest debt is obviously to Edward Said's seminal work, *Orientalism*, for extending the connection

Jean-leon Gerome
The Serpent Charmer

The recent integration of the *Design for Islamic Societies* (DIS) program within a broader area of study of *Architecture and Culture* provided a platform for the students of DIS to engage in a discussion concerning the program, particularly regarding the curriculum and its role in defining the scope of the program and its position within the larger framework of the Department of Architecture.

Structured initially for the students, "*who will practice, teach or research the architecture of Muslim countries*", the DIS program admits students largely from the "*Third World*." The definition "*Muslim countries*" encompasses a multitude of regions, cultures and societies. While the program focuses on such a wide spectrum of contexts, it has the inherent possibility of including students from all over the world who share an interest in multicultural built environments.

Within the present group of students, interests vary from Islamic architectural production to contemporary critical theories. Moreover, there is a plurality of academic, cultural and ideological backgrounds. This multiplicity belies the current singular definition of the program. Similarly, it cannot be defined as an "*eastern*" program operating within a "*western*" academic context, nor as a "*nonwestern*" program. This attempt to achieve identity through an "*otherness*" to the west appears paradoxical. Such a definition has deep implications relative not only to the program, but to its content. In short, such a preoccupation with "*definition*" creates seclusion within the academic community, obstructing the exchange of thoughts and ideas. Concurrently, the existing heterogenous backgrounds and contradictory viewpoints of the students have positive implications. Polarities expose the possibility for areas of overlap which can offer a space for multiculturalism and spontaneous interaction.

The possibility of creating a pluralistic forum highlights the role of the curriculum. In particular, the courses of the *Design for Islamic Societies* program should be structured to expose the multiple foci and different cultural interests to the Department of Architecture at large. However, the difficulty encountered when trying to communicate ideas and experiences in an unfamiliar academic context reinforces the need to restructure the methods course. The course should offer a transition from the "*eastern*" architectural background to the "*western theoretical*" context. At the same time, the extent to which an introductory course can create a transition between "east" and "west", between "design" and "theory", needs to be questioned. A generalized overview can lead to superficiality, denying the inherent complexity of the critical theories. Alternatively, engagement with certain critical issues (e.g. orientalism) could be a vehicle for associating with the critical theories at large. The wide range of courses offered in other areas of study in the department is an effective way of generating interaction. The design studio could be a suitable venue where a focus on both western and the nonwestern issues could encourage dialogue. The design faculty are a valuable resource if an attempt is to be made to bridge the gap between DIS and its environs.

The glass door which defines the territory of the DIS program provides an appropriate metaphor for the issues herein. It offers a complex interpretation of relationships - viewed from one angle it is reflective, from another it is transparent, from yet another it appears protective. Variations depend on our own positions and the kind of light shed on it. Can the inside/outside dilemma be solved by eliminating the glass door ? It is a much broader issue and whether we can really go beyond the glass door remains to be seen ■

OLDS 1992

It is not surprising that within the nationally and culturally diverse student body and faculty at MIT, there are many who are engaged in issues revolving around the East-West discourse. The intent of this issue, however, is not to simply expose their work, but to demonstrate the way these inquiries are expanding (Western) architectural knowledge by exposing the inextricable continuities between East and West. It is an attempt to blur the boundaries often associated with cultural studies, and hence, those which isolate different programs within the Department of Architecture, particularly the former Design for Islamic Societies group.

The following articles investigate not only the formulation of the East-West discourse and its relevance to a rereading of architectural history, but further, they seek to expose the complexities and ambiguities within the discourse itself.

Beyond the Glass Door : Students' Introspective

By Asiya Chowdhury

2 between knowledge and power to the study of the Orient, and exposing how, from being a geographical and cultural entity, the Orient was systematically transformed into an object of research and scholarship, of display, and, ultimately, of domination and exploitation. At the same time, deriving our examples from Turkey and Egypt as representative contexts in which the Orientalist project manifests itself, we sought to introduce Islamic architecture as an "invented tradition" in the sense that historian Eric Hobsbawm uses the term, i.e. invented by Western experts as well as local nationalist elites as part of specific political and ideological agendas.

The sharp dichotomy between what we perceive to be the discipline of architecture (derived from Western architectural history and texts) and what is generally delegated to area/ cultural studies (institutionalized in Middle East Centers, Departments of Asian and Oriental Studies etc.) is only one manifestation of the binary structure, rooted in the legacy of Orientalism, which largely accounts for the enormous intellectual challenge facing any attempt that claims, implicitly or explicitly, to negate this polarizing construct. The location of an Age Khan Program for "Islamic Architecture" within the Department of Architecture at MIT is an instance of such tension and therefore opportunity. Whether in the end it serves to reaffirm the construct or pose a critical challenge to it would determine the next step in the continuous project of rewriting the history of architecture ■

T. Beshir & W. Al-Assan. Keshan Bazaar

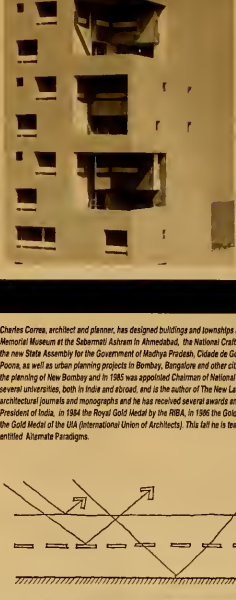
On Regionalism

By Charles Correa

Strange indeed that, since the beginning of time, man has used the most inert materials, like rock and stone, wood and brick, cement and steel, to express the invisible compulsions that consume him.

And yet, in our everyday existence, we seem quite far removed from such passionate concerns. At work, architects face quite commonsensical problems in a somewhat banal world. That is to say, we deal with clients who have particular requirements, budgets, time schedules and so forth. Within these parameters, we try to arrive at suitable arrangements of builtform.

But on another level, just below the surface, architects (at least some of them) seem to have access to a series compulsive, near-mythic images. These act like powerful elixirs, transforming the dross of everyday construction into something valuable.


Kanchanjunga House, Bombay

PAGE THREE

Charles Correa, architect and planner, has designed buildings and townships in various parts of India, including the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Museum at the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, the National Crafts Museum in Delhi, the Jawahar Kala Kendra in Jaipur, the new State Assembly for the Government of Madhya Pradesh, Cidade de Goa in Dona Paula, the Institute of Astrophysics in Poona, as well as urban planning projects in Bombay, Bangalore and other cities of India. From 1970 - 75 he was Chief Architect for the planning of New Bombay and in 1985 was appointed Chairman of National Commission on Urbanization. Correa has taught at several universities, both in India and abroad, and is the author of The New Landscape. His work has been published in various architectural journals and monographs and he has received several awards and honors, including : in 1972 the Padma Shri by the President of India, in 1984 the Royal Gold Medal by the RIBA, in 1986 the Gold Medal of the Indian Institute of Architects and in 1990 the Gold Medal of the UIA (International Union of Architects). This fall he is teaching a Level III studio at MIT with Michael Brawne entitled Alternate Paradigms.

But this of course is not quite the whole picture. For much below this layer of wham-O images, there is a third stratum, a far more profound deep structure, generated by the interaction of culture, aspirations, climate, and other such factors. This deep structure is the wellspring of architecture, a primordial source which underlies the middle level and which generates its compulsive imagery. For example, Frank Lloyd Wright created his Usonian houses not by raiding Cape Cod or Tudor vocabulary, but rather by his intuitive understanding of the aspirations of middle America in the mid-west. In other words, his path seems to go right through the middle layer and touch rock-bottom in the deep structure. On his way back to the surface, he brings with him the new mythic images of USONIA. Deposited at the middle level, they become accessible to all of us, forming the lifestyle of much of North American suburbia throughout this century: the two steps up to the dining area, the carport, the picture window, the open plan, and so forth.

Looked at this way, it is easy to perceive that there are in fact two different sources of Regionalism in architecture. The first consists of those architects who bounce off the middle layer. The main difference between them and the "international" stylists is that their grab-bag of wham-O images is somewhat more localised. But essentially, it is the same process.

On the other hand, there is another process, quite different from the first, which also generates regionalism. This process involves reaching the deep-structure in that lowest layer. It is a far more difficult, yet rewarding, path. Such architecture does not merely transfer images (whether of local or transnational origin), but transforms them, re-inventing them so to speak. In order to understand this process we must examine the forces that generate architecture, and their crucial relationship with each other.

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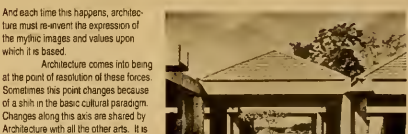
The first of these forces is Culture. In our model it is like a great reservoir, calm and continuous, changing only very gradually over the years. The second is Aspirations. This force can be quite different from Culture- though of course they interact continuously. Aspirations are dynamic and volatile, often quite ephemeral.

The third force acting on architecture is Climate. It is fundamentally an unchanging force. It exerts a far more primary influence on architecture then it does on any other of the arts such as music, painting, or dance. So a very thorough understanding of climate is crucial to an architect's work. It must go far beyond the merely pragmatic. For at the deep-structure level, Climate conditions Culture and its expression, its rites and rituals. In itself, Climate is the source of myth. The metaphysical qualities attributed to open-to-sky space in the cultures of India and Mexico are concommitants of the warm climate in which they exist, just as the films of Ingmar Bergman would be inconceivable without the dark brooding Swedish winters.

The fourth force acting on architecture is Technology. No other art feels its influence so decisively. Musical instruments change, but only gradually. In architecture, on the other hand, the prevailing technology changes every few decades.



And each time this happens, architecture must re-invent the expression of the mythic images and values upon which it is based.

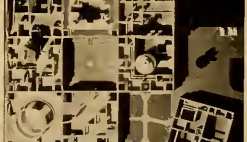
Architecture comes into being at the point of resolution of these forces. Sometimes this point changes because of a shift in the basic cultural paradigm. Changes along this axis are shared by Architecture with all the other arts. It is the frequency and decisiveness of the technological changes that are unique to architecture, and which make it such a sensitive barometer of the health and robustness of a particular society.

Take, for instance, the exquisitely corbelled masonry of the wans of Isphahan, or the half-timbered walls of the Elizabethan cottage. When the technology changes (e.g., the stone has to be replaced by concrete, or the wood by steel), we have two choices: we can either superficially transfer the old images to the new builtform (hence the fake arches and domes we see all around us) or we can transform them, i.e. re-invent them in the new technology. Both options work, but there is a difference. The process of transfer is facile but debilitating, transformation challenges society, but renews it as well.

What do we mean by regionalism? To me, all true architecture is, by definition, regional because it becomes true only when it expresses the prime forces of Culture, Aspirations and Climate in the technology available at a particular point on this planet. Thus, in a profound sense, all the finest examples of architecture that we have experienced, from Fathepur-Sikri at Agra and the temples of Nara to the Oak Park houses of Frank Lloyd Wright, are all regional, not because they exploit the middle layer of facile imagery, but because they make contact with the deep-structure that lies beneath ■

The Gandhi Smarak Sangralaya, Ahmedabad

Nehru Museum, Jaipur



Modern Architecture in the Non-Western World

by Sibel Bozdogan

As captured by Sir Bannister Fletcher's "Tree of Architecture" -the frontispiece to his paradigmatic *A History of Architecture On The Comparative Method*, traditional Western scholarship has drawn a sharp distinction between the historical evolution of Western architecture and the "non-historical styles" of other cultures. Departing from the 19th century Orientalist perception of and fascination with the latter as ethnographic and anthropological categories outside historical time, the study of non-Western art and architecture has typically been an area specialization outside the disciplinary core, and has been almost exclusively confined to their pre-modern, i.e. "traditional" and therefore more "authentic" and "uncontaminated" periods.

The official historiography of Modern Architecture in the twentieth century, most conspicuously represented by Siegfried Giedion among others, has served only to affirm this construct by portraying modernism as a teleological doctrine with an internal logic -a thoroughly rational and unambiguous expression of the condition of modernity rooted in the Enlightenment, and the process of modernization brought about by the Industrial Revolution. At the same time that Western history was legitimized as a universal path to be followed by all "post-traditional societies" of the non-Western world (as modernization theories in sociology called them), modern architecture was thus legitimized as universal rationality. Therefore, modern architecture outside the Western world had nothing interesting to offer beyond historically inevitable imitations and importations of Western models by the modernizing nationalist elites and their Western consultants.

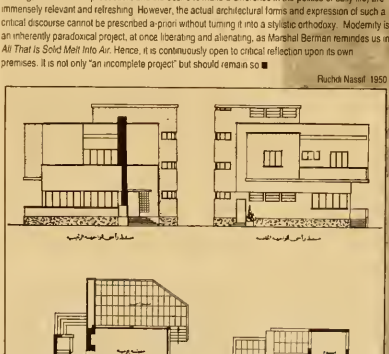
The irony is that such a full identification of modern architecture with the emancipatory discourse of modernity, which critical theory and historiography has shown us to be no longer tenable, is too readily taken on board by various post- and anti-modernist forces in the non-Western world today. The latter argue that, since the modern premise of a liberated society turned out to be a myth, its architectural expression also needs to be condemned in favor of either an essentialism advocating the return to tradition, i.e. a state anterior to the modernist project, or a justificatory post-modernism, i.e. a state which gives up the modernist project altogether, negating any transformative or critical role for architecture in society. It is therefore extremely urgent to embark upon a less totalizing and more rigorous critique of the modern project in the non-western world, in order to ultimately restore architectural modernism as an ambiguous and critical discourse, irreducible to an official style.

The first task is to discouple the forms of modern architecture from such legitimizing and totalizing claims like scientific rationality, functionalism, zeitgeist etc. and to expose how modern architecture was introduced to many non-western nations from above by a bureaucratic, professional and intellectual elite, primarily as a *symbol* of modernity and only *after* the critical force of the modernist avant-garde had already eclipsed in the West giving way to a seemingly unified "international style". In the conspicuous absence of all the conditions under which Western modernism flourished (i.e. the industrialized metropolis, the autonomous bourgeoisie subject and a full-fledged capitalist economy among others), modernist forms in the non-western world have not emerged as a radical critique of the discipline of architecture from within, but have been adopted as part of official cultural agendas engineered and enforced by nationalist elites who perceived themselves as agents of civilization.

On the other hand, nationalist consciousness in the post-colonial world is painfully contradictory in its premises both wishing to reclaim a cultural past as the basis of national identity and yet, representing a real aspiration for participating in a larger world as a way of negating Otherness and provinciality. Constructs of cultural and architectural modernity in the non-western world "are not merely texts" as Edward Said would have put it, but they have a "worldliness" which correspond to a genuine desire to connect to "the larger reservoir of human culture as a whole". This is a reminder to resist the tendency for turning the recent critique of modernity into a new orthodoxy of militant identity politics which merely reverses the Orientalist construct this time to argue for the inherent virtue of everything representing hitherto marginalized Others. Instead, it invites recognition that identities are always "constructed", complex, multiple, contradictory and continuously shifting and that aspirations are as much part of identities as cultural inheritance.

Given the magnitude and complexity of the problems facing non-western nations today, the real premises of the modernist avant-garde (i.e. the radical questioning of the accepted definitions and aesthetic norms of the discipline of architecture, the passionate engagement with issues of housing, urbanism and production, and the desire to make a difference in the politics of daily life) are immensely relevant and refreshing. However, the actual architectural forms and expression of such a critical discourse cannot be prescribed a-priori without turning it into a stylistic orthodoxy. Modernity is an inherently paradoxical project, at once liberating and alienating, as Marshal Berman reminds us in *All That Is Solid Melt Into Air*. Hence, it is continuously open to critical reflection upon its own premises. It is not only "an incomplete project" but should remain so ■

Ruchdi Nassif 1950



Erich Mendelsohn, Hadassah Medical Center, Jerusalem 1937-39

National "International Style"

An Architectural Dispute Between Erich Mendelsohn and the Tel Aviv Circle

[based on an S.M.Arch.S thesis proposal]

by Alona Nitzan-Shiftan

Most of the significant Jewish architectural production in pre-state Palestine was executed during the thirties by either members of the Tel Aviv Circle, a young architects' organization, or by the elitist modern master Erich Mendelsohn. While the former, at the architectural forefront of a major building boom, employed a Zionist-espoused vocabulary of the Modern Movement with unparalleled consistency; Mendelsohn, upon opening his practice there in 1934, pursued a quiet modernism, pure, austere, strong and static, incorporating regional typology and a twist of oriental symbolism. This constituted a conspicuous shift away from his well known architecture in Europe, already canonized and reused in Palestine. Neither the variety of building types nor their diverse patronage can explain the architectural differences between these professional architects. Both Mendelsohn and the Tel Aviv circle were an integral part of the evolution of the Modern Movement in Europe. They were all self-identified Zionists, participants in the creation of "a national home", rather than foreign advocates of western progress. Evidently, these two architectural tendencies embodied conflicting ideological agendas. Against the background of pre-war Europe and its Jewish crisis, tensions caused by power struggles between British colonialism, Zionism, and the Palestinian Arab nationalism, generated conflicting cultural, social and political convictions.

The Tel Aviv Circle, the leading protagonists of Modern Architecture in pre-state Palestine, adhered to the revolt this historical moment constituted: the negation of the Jewish diaspora life in favor of an independent upstanding being, i.e. "a national home"; the negation of the European bourgeoisie in favor of an agrarian working society (or social equality in the less desirable urban setting); and, the negation, primarily as a consequence of the emerging Arab Israeli conflict, of the romanticism of the East in favor of an original collective image, which would develop into the myth of the Sabra (the Israeli born). Judaism, a pre-national common denominator, was secularized in this process to fit into the national paradigm.

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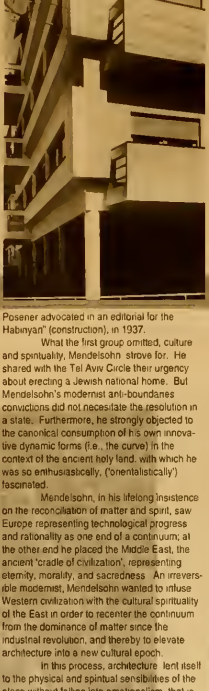
This triple negation facilitated the adoption of the avant-garde. In Palestine, the quest for national identity could not rely on a common national heritage, because hitherto, the nation was an abstract entity, visually immersed in other cultures and their forms of representation. The emergence of the Zionist movement in Europe was remote from the locus of its realization, Palestine. Thus, the change the movement advocated was external to the circumstances of its targeted criticism and negation. As such, the region was considered a tabula rasa, a process enhanced by growing political hostility, which largely excluded the Arab architectural and cultural discourse already marginalized by colonial rule. For the uprooted Jew, the plain white modern housing was the proper traceless home, "an apartment free from past memories" as Julius



Zeev Rechter, Engel House, Tel Aviv 1933

Posener advocated in an editorial for the Habinyan" (construction), in 1937.

What the first group omitted, culture and spirituality, Mendelsohn strove for. He shared with the Tel Aviv Circle their urgency about erecting a Jewish national home. But Mendelsohn's modernist anti-boundaries convictions did not necessitate the resolution in a state. Furthermore, he strongly objected to the canonical consumption of his own innovative dynamic forms (i.e., the curve) in the context of the ancient holy land, with which he was so enthusiastically, ("orientalistically") fascinated.

Mendelsohn, in his lifelong insistence on the reconciliation of matter and spirit, saw Europe representing technological progress and rationality as one end of a continuum; at the other end he placed the Middle East, the ancient "cradle of civilization", representing eternity, morality, and sacredness. An irreversible modernist, Mendelsohn wanted to infuse Western civilization with the cultural spirituality of the East in order to recenter the continuum from the dominance of matter since the industrial revolution, and thereby to elevate architecture into a new cultural epoch.

In this process, architecture lent itself to the physical and spiritual sensibilities of the place without falling into emotionalism, that is, without compromising the clarity of form and technology already achieved by the modern movement. In so doing, Mendelsohn reinstated for the Jews their religious purpose as the chosen people to illuminate humankind. Further, as a privileged refugee, i.e. by becoming a British citizen, he could afford to graciously include the Arab people into his semitic utopia of the Middle East revival. Here in fact, the recognized properties of culture are attributed to civilization and vice versa. In other words, a particular cultural heritage is intended to influence civilization whereas the universalistic paradigm of Modernism is entrusted with the creation of a specific cultural project.

Ultimately, both Mendelsohn and the Tel Aviv Circle fell short in contextualizing their Modernism. Mendelsohn failed to acknowledge that reality was not only the existing, but the emerging. An introverted, pure, "eternal" architecture contradicted the dynamism of the Zionist revolution. The coincidence of the social aspects of Zionism, most notably its agriculture and housing projects, and that of Modernism, left him indifferent. In contrast, the Tel Aviv Circle which had access to the original moment of Modernism in Europe, chose to emphasize its functional, "scientific" aspects as well as the social ones. But, in doing so, they failed to recognize the widening gap between local culture and the new building activity. The triple negation mentioned above overlook cultural concerns, which went beyond site specificities.

Today, when typified Modern Architecture worldwide is alienated from its point of origin, and when the West looks to indigenous architecture as an inspirational source with which to overcome alienation, these early examples of Modernism's relocation deserve reconsideration ■

Tel Aviv Aerial view, 30's

The illustration shows members of the Orient club Colombo, Ceylon taken from Arnold Wright's compilation *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon*, published by Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1907. Membership of the club was exclusive to males from locally resident elite families. Europeans were specifically excluded. Seated prominently in the foreground are the senior members of the club the foremost of whom is attired in a *trouser under the cloth*

The trouser under the cloth

by Anoma Pieris

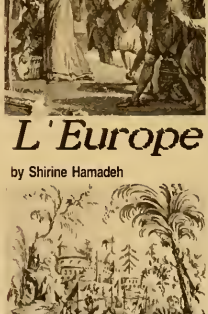
The trouser under the cloth (*saramayata kalisama*) is the name given to a peculiar mode of dress that prevailed during the late colonial period (1815-1948) in Sri Lanka. It was worn largely by a westernized elite who had appropriated western dress - over which they then wrapped a shortened version of the traditional sarong. The short cloth thus became a gestural claim to a discarded identity and appeared more as a pièce de resistance. This act of manipulating a previous identity in gestural acts of resistance was used to conceal the hidden aspiration to be western. The dynamics that provoked the concealing or revealing of western aspirations created the critical dilemmas of post - colonial progress. The choices made by the newly independent social structure were often reflected in their appropriation of technology and were expressed through urban architecture.

The architectures of resistance (regionalism, revivalism and traditionalism) assume essentialist positions in their flirtation with a past which has often sacrificed its social relevance to the forces of contemporary progress. A dismembered tradition can often salvage identity only through gestural acts of authentication. The proponents of these attitudes who identify themselves as "marginalized others" (in relation to the west) are for most developing societies a small but powerful group of westernized elite.

How could this group, that during colonialism led the avant - garde of westernization, effect this reversal of ideology? Why did they create a national identity in an effort to reclaim independent status? While developing countries rush head-long into the very westernization that *the elite* once promoted, the elite now calls for an act of resistance (i.e., tradition). But surely a group that has been westernized for generations can only claim to *represent* the authenticity of their culture. The *arewe - garde* elite attempt to authenticate this position by alluding to a previous (pre - colonial) hierarchy of tradition. This alienates the new economic generations and effectively maintains conventional social distances protected by socially exclusive westernization.

The architectures of resistance, the representation of selective national and cultural identities, is created against the foreground of economic progress and social aspiration. Whereas some of these essentialist positions have been decried as nostalgic, sentimental or populist - *Regionalism* as an architecture of resistance has been frequently legitimized by architectural critique which offers us a substantial list of architects believed to fall within this category. Minar Books by the Aga Khan Trust, has presented a series of monographs on architects frequently discussed within this debate including *Ekram, Fathy, Bawa, Correa*. Curiously, every one of them falls within the category of a westernized elite as defined by economic class.

Regionalism, implying an architecture transfixed on locality, presents a position clearly



L'Europe galante

by Shirine Hamadeh

Overture

Vénus — La Discorde
Chorus: Pleasures, Graces and Laughters
Four Acts
France, Spain, Italy, Turkey

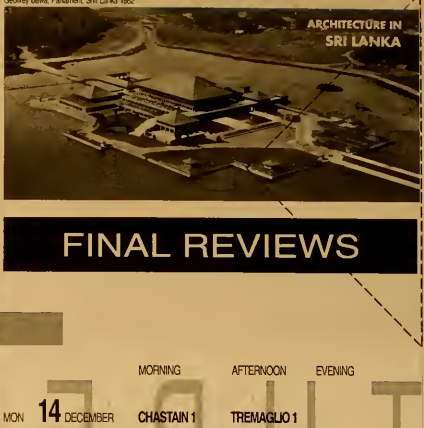
De la Motte's operatic ballet was undoubtedly an eloquent overture to eighteenth century Europe turbulent, seduced by the plurality of worlds, haunted by typology and classification, impassioned of opera, in search for Happiness. "Oh Happiness! *Our Being's End and Aim! Good, Pleasure, Ease, Content! Whate'er thy Name!*" (Pope, 1734). Such were the invocations of the century following the battle of Venus and La Discorde. L'*Europe galante* had announced a century of dismay. "*Pauvre siècle!*" ("Wretched century!") repeated Voltaire relentlessly. Every French mind contested and criticized, revealing the absurdity of the state and society. And while Diderot and d'Alembert constructed their universal ideal on the bases of Reason, Candide's polemical act denounced the optimism of the age of Enlightenment: "Ah! meilleur des mondes, où êtes-*vous?*" (Ah! best of worlds, where are you?") (Voltaire, 1758). That was perhaps the most lyrical articulation of Europe's troubled consciousness. And its answer lay abroad. "*Nous allons dans un autre univers; c'est dans celui-là, sans doute, que tout est bien!* ("We are going into another world, surely it must be there that everything is best.") (Voltaire, 1758). Candide reassured his beloved Cunégonde upon their arrivel to Cadix. Libertins, travellers, discontented wanderers, observed, compared, classified, criticized. Chateaubriand from America, de Brosse from Australia, Tavernier from Constantinople, Volney from Egypt, the Jesuits from China, Gulliver from Utopie. They were read and cited endlessly. They were the empirical support to older theories and

opposed to the processes of universalization. While this may be considered laudable, should it necessarily dismiss the more favorable aspects of the modern project ? The problems of universalization lie not in the importation of western architectures, but in the lack of transformation. The pre-independence indigenization of colonial (western and non - western) building types have, after all, not only been successful but have been absorbed into the historic identity of these nations However, the position of a defensive resistance, particularly when accomodating clear national or political agendas, runs the risk of being manipulated or commodified, and thus, failing prey to the very characteristics it so vehemently opposes.

An interesting illustration of this paradox is seen in the example of the Sri Lankan parliament building designed by Geoffrey Bawa. The building maybe interpreted as a blown up version of a pavilion or prayer hall. Regionalism in this case has been defined as his respect for context and site, application of local construction methods, and use of local building materials. It is an agenda to which he has consistently adhered throughout most of his architectural work. The parliament, however , was built on a marshy site dredged at great expense to create an artificial lake The contract was handled by a Japanese team and the materials and plant were imported Bawa avoids defining himself as a regionalist as he himself claims inspiration from many European sources Ironically, this is the building through which he has gained the broadest recognition as a regionalist.

Unfortunately, the only alternative to the architectures of resistance has been a direct appropriation of International style in the form of the corporate tower and the internalized mall - the symbols of economic progress and social aspiration. Yet an architecture of resistance which is so far removed from these very aspects of social life can hardly hope to affect the direction of contemporary architecture The challenge therefore lies in utilizing available (western or other) resources to create an architecture that does not reinforce these binary oppositions, but helps to diffuse and mitigate them ■

Geoffrey Bawa, Parliament, Shri Lanka 1982



FINAL REVIEWS

		MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING
MON	14 DECEMBER	CHASTAIN 1	TREMAGLIO 1	
TUES	15 DECEMBER	A. ANDERSON 1	MYER 2	HALASZ 3
WED	16 DECEMBER	WAMPLER 2	KANDA 3	CORREA/BRAWNE 3
THU	17 DECEMBER	GRIMSHAW 2	DOMEYKO 2	HACK/STRICKLAND 3
FRI	18 DECEMBER	REITER 4.104	CHOW 4.101	

beliefs. Montaigne's "good savage" acquired its final formulation, and the Turk was forever decadent. Imagination alone could not have built this incredible edifice on the most diverse of humanity. The foreigner had become indispensable to French literature, as *L'Europe galante* had presaged it. He was brought home as the scornful witness to an unpleasant reality. Marana's Turkish spy, Montesquieu's Persians Usbek and Rica, Chinese, Americans, Hurons, every citizen of the world, came in turn, praised and deplored. The foreign, and the no-longer-threatening-Orient in particular, was the locus of everyone's expression of discontent, fears and desires, from Montesquieu and Voltaire in philosophy, to Favart and Duos in operatic and theatrical production, Bayle and Reland in theology, Volney in the science of travel, and Galland in the art of erotic translations

We have been accustomed, under Saidian and post-orientalism polemicists' hegemony, to affribute post-colonial representations of the Orient to the legacy of the once "inextricably tied orientalist and colonialist discourses". Surely, Napoleon and the first enlightened philologists provided colonial representations of the Orient with new archeological grounds. But the Orient, as it were, exotic, despotic, backward, fundamentally different and sexually decadent, invoked in the nineteenth century by Renan, Barrès, Lamartine and Flaubert, had emerged in the eighteenth century, out of the mental structures of a critical and tormented age in which the quest for individual rights and happiness brought the debate on human diversity to the fore of the French intellectual scene It had emerged out of a readiness to change the society, out of a conscious search for, and identification of, an alter-ego for the sake of self-reformulation. As such, the Orient was the foreigner par excellence That which had been institutionalized in fifth century Athens, and that which will be cut out of his rights of Man by the vigor of nationhood and xenophobia in August 1789, in the first Déclaration des droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen. In the eighteenth century, it was represented only because Europe wanted to re-present itself Voltaire's and Montesquieu's Orient was despotic because it prefigured the future of European monarchies But Montesquieu's despotic machine was ensured by the fundamentally different nature of its subjects, by their propensity for slavery, as Aristotle had mandated it long before him. Absolute monarchy was thus doomed to decadence and corruption, and Europe's enlightened monarchs and nobility, who had not yet disposed of their exigencies for self-glorification, could linger safely. Galland's Orient was sexually perverse because it was a respite from health control and sexual repressiveness at home, and his *1001 nights*, loaded with sexuality, violence and perversion, was a delightful allegory of immoralities untold And the Orient was exotic, "Arabian tales" were in vogue and Turkish dresses were worn at masquerades, because the monopoly of the Church, morality, fashion, and the Corneillian tragedy, had become too austere It was in the same vein that Italian music and opera, and every affront to Reason stirred the enthusiasm of the eighteenth century, and that Vénus's appeal for a better world, an *Europe galante* as it were, remained a triumph for ninety years. As for the fate of Europe's Orient, Venus could not have yet predicted it in her first chanted invocations.

"... *ne vous lassez jamais,*
Vous travaillez pour le Bonheur du monde "
Les Plaisirs parlent pour satisfaire à ses Ordres
Fin de L'Europe galante .2

("...never give up;
You are working for the Happiness of the world."
The Pleasures go off to satisfy her Orders.
End of L'Europe galante.) ■

1 (Galant Europe) An opera-ballet written by Houdar dela Motte (music by Campra), presented for the first time in Paris in 1697 by the Academie Royale de Musique
2 To Dalia, biologist and hedonist
● For further reading on French thought in the eighteenth century and the debate on human diversity see, P Hazard *La pensee europeenne au XIIIe siècle* 3 vols Paris. Boivin et Cie (1946). T Todorov *Nous et les autres: la réflexion française sur la diversité humaine* Paris Seuil (1989) On the concept of foreigner in history see. J. Kristeva *Strangers to Ourselves* New York Columbia University Press (1991)

IAP93

4 394 Interactive Art and Technology
Sharon Daniel
assist in completion and installation of an electro-mechanical video sculpture for two participants

4 194 Mapping Boston
Wellington Reiter
produce a new map of Boston based on selective architectural criteria (walls, gates, bridges, towers, and monuments).

4 280 Architecture Internship Program

4 299 Hands-on Building Construction Workshop
Masood Khan and Jody Gibbs
build catalonian vaults, rammed earth walls, shells of single and double curvature

4 199 Design Workshop Architecture and Landscape
TBA (MIT and Academy of Architecture in Amsterdam)

4 299 SIGUS Workshop in Jamaica
Reinhard Goethert and Jan Wampler
a two-week workshop in Kingston Jamaica focused on urban housing and community issues

Portfolio Workshop

Architectural Photography An MIT Practicum
Oliver Radford
photograph MIT

Maps and City Views in the Harvard Library Collection
David Friedman

Problems of Housing and Appropriate Technology for Kanmabad, Pakistan
William L. Porter